



Committee on
HOMELAND SECURITY
Chairman Michael McCaul

Opening Statement

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**Statement of Chairman Michael McCaul (R-TX)
Subcommittee on Transportation Security
Committee on Homeland Security**

“Lessons from the LAX Shooting: Preparing for and Responding to Emergencies at Airports”

Remarks as Prepared

Thank you, Chairman Hudson. I would like to offer my sincere condolences to Mr. Hernandez’s wife, Ana, as well as TSA officers Grigsby and Speer, who are all here with us today, and all the victims of the shooting.

I want to commend you, Mr. Chairman, for your leadership of this Subcommittee and for ensuring that we never forget what happened at this extremely busy airport on November 1, 2013. I would also like to thank Los Angeles World Airports for hosting us, and welcome all of our witnesses.

It is critical that the agencies responsible for protecting our airports are doing all that they can to keep passengers and employees safe. I believe this hearing is an important opportunity to examine lessons learned from the shooting, what went well and what didn’t, and how we should apply those lessons to other airports as we move forward.

We live in a very dangerous world. Unfortunately, events like the one that happened here are difficult, if not impossible, to prevent. But what we can do is improve our ability to detect the threats before someone starts shooting, or detonates a bomb, or hops a fence, or takes advantage of any security loophole or vulnerability that we have failed to close for one reason or another.

As Chairman of the Committee on Homeland Security, I know how committed our law enforcement officers are, day in and day out, to staying ahead of any potential threat. And yet, the tragedy that the world watched unfold at this airport could very likely happen again at another airport in the future. So we need to be prepared for that, wherever and whenever it may happen. There are valuable lessons to be learned by the incident that occurred here, but first we need to dissect exactly what happened.

Among the shortcomings in the response to the shooting, we know that all relevant agencies did not join together in a Unified Command structure until 45 minutes after the shooting occurred. Even then, the Los Angeles Fire Department did not join the Unified Command. This mistake, along with a lack of interoperable communications, made the job of executing an effective response much more difficult.

What is perhaps most concerning about the problems identified after the incident is that if the gunman had been shooting randomly, rather than targeting TSA, we would have seen a much greater loss of life; dozens if not hundreds of people could have been killed within the four and a half minutes it took officers to detain the gunman.

Also, on the day of the shooting, airport police were operating vehicle checkpoints and stopping certain vehicles to check for anything suspicious. Yet, as the airport's report points out, it is possible the shooter actually went through one of the vehicle checkpoints and officers did not deter or detect him before he entered Terminal 3 with an assault rifle and began firing.

There is no such thing as 100% security, but this situation reminds us that we cannot become complacent, and we need to constantly stay ahead of potential threats with proven tactics and techniques. There are some parallels to what happened at the Washington Navy Yard just a month and a half before this incident occurred, including that the Navy Yard shooter was able to get through a vehicle checkpoint undeterred and undetected.

I look forward to examining the results of the reviews conducted by the airport operator and TSA Administrator Pistole. I believe we can draw lessons from this tragedy that can help strengthen our emergency response capabilities at airports nationwide.

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